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Religion, Secularism, and Political Discourse in Tanzania: Competing Perspectives by Religious Organizations

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Abstract

Tanzania, one of the few countries in sub-Saharan Africa to have achieved an impressive degree of national integration, is increasingly facing a religious challenge in the nation-building process. Using a historical perspective that traces the origin of the Tanzanian state as well as documenting contemporary evidence, largely based on an in-depth study of the six selected religious organizations, this article makes the argument that there is a high degree of suspicion among religious communities, which makes national unity and political stability fragile. Christian and Islamic organizations generally have different perceptions of the degree to which the Tanzanian state is secular, and they tend to adopt different stances on a number of political issues and public policies. The article recommends a restructuring of governance structures and a change of the state attitude from a state-centric to a more democratic approach that would allow free articulation of societal demands, including those of a religious nature, and the effective management of these demands as a way of promoting peaceful coexistence and cooperation in a multireligious nation.

Religion, governance, and development as a matter of practice in Tanzania date back to the foundation of society and religions in that region. However, from 1961 to the mid-1980s, the relationship between religion, governance, and development in Tanzania was virtually ignored as a subject for research. Immediately after independence, religion became a very sensitive political issue, and the government authorities were reluctant to allow it to be included in social research or political discourse.[1] Political leaders viewed religion as a potentially divisive factor in a newly independent state that was facing the exigent task of bringing together about 120 tribes and people of different races and religious denominations into a nationally integrated political community. To accomplish that mission, the secular state was considered the most suitable institutional arrangement.

During the socialist era (*Ujamaa*) from 1967 to the mid-1980s, Marxism was the dominant paradigm in Tanzania's intellectual circles. Religion was therefore not considered an important category for analysis in social science research. Nevertheless, the absence of research coupled with restricted political discourse did not negate the historical reality of important relationships between religion, politics, and development in post-independence Tanzania. In spite of the major strides that have been made toward national integration and the forces promoting modernization and globalization, religion is resurfacing as an important factor shaping social and political relations as well as playing a critical role in national development. This became more evident with the onset of economic liberalization in the mid-1980s and was further reinforced by political reforms that were made in 1992 to make Tanzania a multiparty democracy. Since then, the tension between religion and secularism has been one of the salient themes in Tanzania's political discourse.

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, it briefly reviews the existing literature on the relationships between religion and governance in Tanzania from a historical perspective. This part of the article traces the relationships since the origins of state formation but focuses mainly on the postcolonial era, particularly the period starting in the early 1980s, by which time religion had assumed some prominence in intellectual and political discourse. I attempt in this part to explore the main themes, theoretical perspectives, and methodologies that have been adopted in the existing studies. The second part of the article entails some empirical analysis of five selected religious organizations that focuses on the way in which they position themselves in regard to the various issues of religion, governance, and development.

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[1] Even in the national population census, religion as a category has been excluded since 1967.

RELIGION, ORIGINS OF THE STATE, AND
NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TANZANIA

The boundaries of Tanganyika were created by European colonialists in the second half of the 19th century following the partition of Africa by the Berlin Conference in 1884. By contrast, state formation in Zanzibar, which united with Tanganyika in 1964 to become part of the United Republic of Tanzania, preceded the Western creation of the Tanganyika state. Zanzibar has a longer history as a state, dating back to around the 12th century during the emergence of the Swahili city-states and later developments in the 16th and 17th centuries when the coastal communities were battling with the Portuguese invaders.

Whereas modern state formation on the Tanzanian mainland has been underway for less than a century and a half and is largely associated with colonialists, the Tanzanian nation is "a product of a long historical process stretching back hundreds, even thousands of years; a process that involved cultural, economic, social and political development and inter-mixture of diverse peoples who have settled in this part of Africa" (Sutton 1997: 1). Before the advent of colonialists, Tanganyika was peopled by a large number of tribes and had separate political units with diverse political features and cultures. A wide range of inter-actions among tribes and kingdoms, such as trade, intermarriages, migration, and creation of new settlements, generated new cultures and ideas, some of which have had a direct impact on the present society. The following paragraphs will provide a brief account of the origins of Islam and Christianity in Tanzania.

To date, no specific written evidence has been established that documents the advent of Islam in East Africa. The earliest evidence (by inference) of a Muslim presence on the East African coast is the foundation of a mosque at Shanga on Pate Island, where gold, silver, and copper coins dated 830 C.E. (roughly two centuries after the death of Prophet Muhammad) were found during an excavation in the 1980s (Lodhi and Westerlund 1997). The Kizimkazi mosque in southern Zanzibar, which dates to 1007 C.E., is the oldest Muslim landmark known so far in East Africa. Ibn Battuta from Maghreb, who visited East Africa in 1331, reported that on his arrival in East Africa, he felt at home, as the coastal population was largely Muslim at the time and Arabic was the language of literature and trade (Gibb 1962; Lodhi and Westerlund 1997). For a long time, Islam was confined to the coastal areas and the Indian Ocean islands. The spread of Islam to the interior came relatively late; in the early 19th century, when the area was under German rule, considerable proselytization was carried out by the Sufi orders commonly known as *twariqa* (Muslim brotherhoods), mostly the Qadiriyya and Shadhiliyya (Nimitz 1980).

Before the arrival of Europeans, Muslims enjoyed a hegemonic position in coastal East Africa. As early as the 10th century, there were notable Islamic city-

states and Muslim settlements on Kilwa, Zanzibar, and Pemba (Alpers 1969). The version of Islam that was first brought to the region was largely Sunni and based on Sufism,[2] a feature that to a considerable extent contributed to what later came to be referred to as "African Islam," that is, a version of Islam that easily accommodated African traditions. The 14th and 15th centuries could be described as the golden age of Islamic civilization, which was also referred to as the Shirazi or Swahili civilization, when the coastal towns of Kilwa and Mombasa served as centers of Shirazi culture, which spread to other coastal towns in East Africa (Nimitz 1980).

The first serious challenge to Islamic civilization occurred during the 16th and 17th centuries, following the Portuguese conquest aimed at controlling the coast of the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese attempted to destroy the Muslim city-states of Kilwa, Mombasa, Lamu, Pate, and Zanzibar. Some sheiks were killed, and their people were dispossessed because they defended their faith and settlements (Harries 1954). The Portuguese onslaught hastened the decline of the Shirazi civilization and Islamic hegemony along the coast and prevented the massive spread of Islam to the hinterland (Nimitz 1980). However, the Portuguese political and cultural influence did not last long; toward the end of the 17th century, the Portuguese were vanquished with the help of Omani Arabs. For more than a century and a half, Islamic civilization flourished again under the Arab dominion established by Sayyid Said bin Sultan in the 1830s and 1840s. With the transfer of the capital of the Oman Empire from Muscat to Zanzibar by Sayyid Said, Zanzibar became the leading center of Swahili and Islamic civilization during the 19th century. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the entire coast experienced a resurgence of prosperity, although many of the older towns could not be revived (Nimitz 1980).

During the 1820s and 1830s, Arabs and other Muslim coastal traders, some with the financial backing of Indian merchants, began to organize caravans into the interior to obtain ivory and slaves, the two most important commodities of the time. The trade caravans led to two important phenomena, The first was the beginning of the integration of the coastal communities and those of the East African interior, and the second was the spread of Islam for the first time into the East African interior. Because the first contacts between the coastal and interior peoples involved, among other things, the slave trade and slavery, this created the first fault line in the subsequent development of nationalism and national integration.

Whereas Islam has been in existence on the East African coast for over a millennium, the presence of Christianity dates only to about the middle of the 19th

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[2] Sufism is a version of Islam centered on the inner mystical or psychospiritual dimension of Islam.

century. Although the Portuguese, who were the first Christians to set foot on the coast of East Africa, arrived in the 16th century and occupied the East African coast up to 1698, when they were vanquished with the help of Omani Arabs, the Portuguese did not engage in evangelizing (Nimitz 1980). The first missionary society to arrive was the French Holy Ghost Fathers, who settled in Zanzibar in 1863 and moved their headquarters to Bagamoyo in 1868 (Iliffe 1979). The Anglicans of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa also established their station in Zanzibar in 1864 and shortly afterward spread their operations to the mainland, where their initial stations were at Magila, on the border between Bonde and Usambara, and at Masasi in the extreme south (Wilson 1936). In 1878, the White Fathers, a largely French Roman Catholic mission society, set up their base in Tabora (Ludwig 1999). The Church Missionary Society, another Anglican mission, established a station at Mpwapwa in 1876. In 1878, the London Missionary Society settled at Mirambo's capital and soon spread its operations to the areas along Lake Tanganyika. By 1879, the White Fathers had reached as far as Ujiji, and by 1885, five missionary societies were operating in Tanganyika (Iliffe 1979).

Initially, however, the process of conversion to Christianity by European missionaries was very slow, being largely confined to people who were drawn to the mission stations. With time, local converts worked alongside the European evangelists and performed different roles as catechists, teachers, or evangelists, resolutely preaching the Bible in their vernaculars; thus they were able to attract a mass of followers in most parts of the country. Later, under the German colonial rule, the Lutherans and Moravians established their stations and became active in the country. The Lutherans were based primarily in the northern parts of the country, and the Moravians operated largely in the western parts. The Moravians established their first mission station at Rungwe in 1891(Ludwig 1999).

A few differences and similarities could be noted in the origins of the Islam and Christianity. In terms of differences, the most obvious is that Islam preceded Christianity for more than eight centuries. Islamic civilization was dominant on the East African coasts for centuries. Furthermore, whereas Christianity was spread largely by well-organized missions (which provided a range of services to communities, such as education and health services), the spread of Islam was accomplished mostly by traders or part-time preachers who had not systematically trained for the task. In terms of similarities, in both religions, natives attempted to incorporate some African traditions into the established religion, a phenomenon that led some analysts later to refer to "African" Islam and "African" Christianity.

During the struggle for independence, particularly after World War II up to the time of independence, there were diverse social cleavages that could have influenced the process of national integration. These included the religious divisions between Christians and Muslims on the mainland, which are partly reinforced by

the geographical clustering of each of these communities. Muslims, a majority of whom were concentrated along the coast and are commonly referred to as *Waswahili*,[3] constituted a community with a certain sense of identity based on their religion, culture, and geographical location.[4] Christians, a majority of whom lived in the hinterland (*Wabara*), also had a sense of identity, however amorphous, based on their religion, culture, and geographical location. However, during the nationalist struggles, Tanganyikans were temporarily able to transcend their religious differences to a considerable degree under the banner of nationalism when they formed one broad-based movement under the Tanganyika National Union (TANU) to remove the British colonialists. Immediately after independence, however, the religious discourse changed and sometimes was presented as a covert struggle for power or even a clash of civilizations between *Waswahili* and *Wabara* (Nimitz 1980).[5]

RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION OF THE SOCIETY

There are no reliable up-to-date figures on the exact proportions of Christians, Muslims, and traditional believers in Tanzania. However, some scholars estimate that about two thirds of East African Muslims reside in Tanzania and that in Zanzibar, Muslims constitute almost 99 percent of the total population (Nimitz 1980). According to the preindependence census of 1957 in Tanganyika, Muslims constituted 31 percent of the population, 25 percent were Christians (17 percent Roman Catholics and 8 percent Protestants), and 44 percent were believers in African traditional religions (ATRs). However, the only postindependence census to include a religious category (1967) indicated that Muslims constituted 30 percent of the total population compared to 32 percent Christians and 37 percent believers in ATRs.[6] Recent studies suggest that the percentage of adherents of ATRs is declining (Mhina 2006). Among Muslims, over 85 percent belong to the Sunni Shafi sect. Most indigenous Muslims belong to this sect. There are also some Sunni Shafi Arabs, particularly those from Yemen, as well as some Sunni Asians. Most Arabs of Oman origin belong to Ibadhi sect. Most Sunni Asians belong to the Hanafi school of law. There are also tiny segments of Ismailis, Bokhoras, and

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[3] The word *Swahili* comes from an Arabic term that means "coastal dwellers," and the term *Waswahili* is sometimes used interchangeably with *coastal people*, *Washirazi*, and *Muslims*.

[4] This sense of identity could be traced from the early days of coastal Islamic civilization between the 12th and 14th centuries.

[5] The term *Wabara* literally refers to the people of the interior (see, e.g., Nimitz 1980).

[6] Some analysts have questioned the validity of the 1967 figures, claiming that that they might have been tailored for political motives (see, e.g., Said 1998b). The arguments that have been raised to cast doubt on the figures include the dramatic decline of the Muslim population without explanation and the relatively high percentage of believers in indigenous religions.

Ithnasheris among Tanzanians of Asian origin. The latter, with about 15,000 members, constitutes the biggest Asian community in Tanzania (Voigt-Graf 1998).

After the January 1964 revolution in Zanzibar, the two countries, Tanganyika and Zanzibar, united in April of the same year into one sovereign republic, the United Republic of Tanzania. In one respect, the merger of the countries represented a step toward national integration and pan-African unity. However, it also brought to the fore new challenges, including the intricacy of defining the nature of the state along religious-secular dimensions. The ruling elite on the mainland (where the population is made up of about equal proportions of Muslims and Christians and a significant proportion of believers in ATRs) leaned toward the establishment of a more secular-based state, hoping that such an arrangement would provide equal opportunities to people of all religions. In contrast, a predominantly Muslim Zanzibar was inclined to set up a semisecular state. Although Islam was not constitutionally identified as an official religion of the state, it was accorded a special status, including the teaching of Islamic knowledge and Arabic language in public schools as well as the continuation of the Kadhi courts to deal with personal affairs such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance cases of Muslims.

This religious divide between the mainland (Tanganyika) and Zanzibar apparently had some impact on nationalist politics of Zanzibar, where the society was predominantly Muslim. During the nationalist struggles, in additional to racial prejudices and economic considerations with regard to property ownership, some Shirazi factions in Zanzibar, particularly those of Pemba and Northern Zanzibar and most Arabs, seem to have been inspired by religious considerations. There was a feeling that closer ties with recent immigrants from the mainland, some of whom were Christians, who were members of the African Association (the African welfare association that was the predecessor of TANU) might in the long run have a harmful impact on Zanzibar's Islamic culture. The mainland immigrants were perceived to have some loyalty to the mainland, a factor that the Shirazi and Arabs thought could jeopardize not only Zanzibar's sovereignty but also its cultural heritage and religious orientation. The split of the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) in 1959 and the formation the Zanzibar and Pemba People's Party (ZPPP) may have been precipitated not only by racial and economic concerns but also by religious concerns (Bakari 2001).

Thus in the process of nation building in Tanzania, the suspicion and distrust between the Christian and Muslim communities seem to persist even after nearly a half of a century of independence and quite a long process of national integration. There is a covert competition between the two dominant cultures: the Swahili-Islamic culture on the one hand and the Western/Christian and traditional cultures of the mainland interior on the other. Brenner (1993: 15) asserts that there is an urge to "reinstate the 'Islamic glorious past'" on the East African coast,

which non-Muslims may interpret as a move that "can represent the resurgence of another imperial expansion: the spread of *dar al-Islam* (the land of Islam) at the expense of *dar al-kufr* (the land of unbelief)." This observation might imply that the Muslim community is preparing for a religious conquest. Although that may be an overstatement, there is no question that these two dominant religious communities have nearly always competed against each other for greater political influence and economic dominance as well the shaping of the nation's culture and will continue to do so. In principle, there is nothing inherently wrong with such competition; in fact, some aspects of competition may be perceived as constructive, for example in the area of social service provision. The difficulty lies in how that competition is carried out and how it is managed by the secular state. Problems arise when there is a perception that one side is favored by the state or at least allowed to operate freely while the other is contained or suppressed.

THE DEBATES: APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

A critical review of the literature on religion, secularism, and politics in Tanzania shows that different approaches and methods have been used to explain the subject matter. Heilman and Kaiser (2002) discern three broad approaches that aptly capture the diversity of perspectives and opinion: a standard view, an Islamic view and a Christian view.

The standard or official view, which the government in Tanzania backs, is that the colonial rulers were responsible for the present state of the relationship between religion and governance in Tanzania. This was because the colonizers, first the Germans and later the British, structured colonial society according to social divisions based on race (Europeans, Asians, Arabs, and Africans), religion (Christians, Muslims, and their respective denominations), and geographical area (cash-crop growing areas and labor reservoirs). When the nationalist movement under Julius Nyerere, the first president and chairman of the ruling party after independence, started to embark on a national integration project by uniting people of different social identities for the anticolonial struggle, it adopted various nation-building measures and discouraged discrimination of all sorts, including that on the basis of religion. Even the nationalization of schools under African socialism (*Ujamaa*) was presented as an attempt to create educational opportunities for Muslims because most of the private schools at that time were run by the Church (Heilman and Kaiser 2002). From this perspective, state-religion relations as well as Muslim-Christian relations in Tanzania were more or less harmonious from the 1960s to the mid-1980s (Rasmussen, 1993; Tordoff, 1967).

Muslim analysts have provided a critique of the standard view, arguing that rivalry and conflict have characterized both Muslim-state relations and relationships between the two institutionalized religions in Tanzania (see, e.g., Bakari

2001; Jumbe 1994; Mazrui 1988; Njozi 2000, 2003; Said 1998a). This view, like the standard one, attributes the creation of social divisions to colonial rule. According to the Islamic view, both German and British rule (though to varying degrees) promoted Christianity at the expense of Islam. Under both German and British rule, colonial officials and Christian missionaries considered Muslims in East Africa a threat to their religious and political interests in the region. To combat that threat, they often cooperated in formulating and implementing a wide range of public policies that had the intention and effect of favoring Christians and weakening Muslims (Bowers 1971; Oliver 1965; Robinson 1963; Sivalon 1990; Soghayroun 1992). For example, colonial policies, particularly under the British, created gross disparities in education and employment between Muslims and Christians. It has been estimated that at the time of independence, the missions owned and ran two thirds of the schools and half of the hospitals in the country. As a result of discriminatory policies against them, Muslims became more active than Christians during the nationalist struggles in Tanganyika (Said 1998a). The established Christian churches, by contrast, had somewhat harmonious relationships with the state and enjoyed some privileges in managing their own affairs, one of the factors that made them less active than Muslims (Ludwig 1999; Mutasingwa 2006).

According to the Islamic view, therefore, historical factors dating back to the colonial era only partly explain the current socioeconomic and political situation of Muslims in Tanzania. This view holds that after independence, Christians strove to maintain their privileged position, no matter how unfair it was to Muslims, and Muslims strove to change the status quo (Bakari 2001; Njozi 2003). Among other factors, Muslims' relatively weak educational position contributed and still contributes to their underrepresentation in public employment, particularly in the higher-level political and professional posts. In 1993, for example, when the country had a Muslim president (Ali Hassan Mwinyi), the ratio of Muslims to Christians in top government posts (ministers, deputy ministers, principal secretaries, regional commissioners, and district commissioners) was one to six, and that same pattern could be observed in other high-ranking government positions (Jumbe 1994). These figures were reported during a time when there were complaints among some Christians that President Mwinyi was favoring fellow Muslims in appointments to high positions in the government.[7] The fact that Muslim representation in the public service improved slightly under Mwinyi's administration was quite evident (Lipton 2002). Whether President Mwinyi was doing that to favor Muslims (discriminating against non-Muslims) or to rectify the religious imbalance (as a kind of an undeclared affirmative action) is beyond the scope of this article.

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[7] See, for example the newspaper *Kiongozi,* July 25–31, 1993.

The Islamic point of view explains the continued political and economic disparities between the followers of the two main religions in terms of a deliberate and systematic attempt by the postcolonial state, through its policies, decisions, and practices, to undermine the development of Islam and the Muslim community. Examples given by Muslims to illustrate the Tanzanian state's anti-Muslim stance include its 1968 banning of the East African Muslim Welfare Society (EAMWS), which had been set up in 1945 for the purpose of promoting development and welfare of Muslims in East Africa, and the creation of BAKWATA, the state-backed Muslim Supreme Council of Tanzania. Since its creation, in the opinion of those opposed to it, BAKWATA has been under the tight grip of the state and has not been able to deliver in terms of development, factors that have contributed to the erosion of its legitimacy among a significant fraction of the Muslim community in the country.[8] The other example cited was the 1993 ban on the Quran Development Council of Tanzania (Baraza la Uendelezaji Koran Tanzania [BALUKTA]). Whereas independent Islamic organizations were viewed as alternative power centers that could undermine state authority and hence were banned, the government tolerated a number of independent Christian organizations, such as the Christian Council of Tanzania and the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (Heilman and Kaiser, 2002). Throughout the 1970s up to the mid-1980s, under the authoritarian one-party rule, Muslims did not have the opportunity to organize effectively independent of the state. It was only after the introduction of economic liberalization measures in the mid-1980s that independent religious and civil organizations were allowed to operate.

Some Muslims have accused the postcolonial state in Tanzania of favoring Christians at the expense of the Muslim community. Njozi (2003), for example, claims that the 1992 Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and the churches—including the Tanzania Episcopal Conference, the Christian Council of Tanzania, and external church institutions—gave undue advantages to already privileged religious groups. A quite significant fraction of Muslims share this view; they include prominent Muslim clerics, some academics, and some Islamic organizations that are opposed to BAKWATA. According to the supporters of this analysis, the standard and Christian perspectives usually underplay the importance of various factors in post-independence politics (Bakari and Mussa 2004).

The Christian view is antithetical to the Islamic outlook. According to the Christian perspective. the predicament of Muslims in Tanzania is largely due to internal problems among Muslims. It rejects the Muslims' claim that they are exploited and instead attributes their disadvantaged position to their role in the

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[8] According to Sivalon (1992), church leaders asked Nyerere to ban the EAMWS, and afterward, in 1969, many sheikhs who opposed BAKWATA were secretly arrested. See also Said (1998a) and Westerlund (1980).

precolonial slave trade and the prerevolutionary Omani aristocracy in Zanzibar and their strong participation in the German colonial administration (Heilman and Kaiser 2002). The current state of underdevelopment among Muslim communities relative to Christians is explained in terms of the Muslim community's neglect of education and the Christian community's strong emphasis on education as the key to success in both the private and public domains. Muslims' expressions of their grievances are viewed by non-Muslims not in terms of political rights and justice, but as attempts to capture the state to advance their religious interests, including the entrenchment of religious extremism by forging links with extremist forces outside the country (Heilman and Kaiser 2002).

The presence of such diametrically opposed views among a significant number of followers of the two main faith traditions, each of which exerts considerable political influence, may signal an impending crisis of legitimacy over the state's assumed secular character. The main area of contention at the moment is not relations between followers of different religions and denominations as such, but rather the state's relationship with religious communities in the allocation and distribution of public resources such as power, public employment, and freedoms. In other words, the discourse that questions the secular state seems to be inspired by both religious and political motives on the part of both Muslims and Christians.

Just as there are different perspectives, so too are different methodologies used. The arrival at different conclusions on a number of issues related to religion and politics is caused partly by the application of different methodologies. These different conclusions are well observed in the chapters in *Justice, Rights, and Worship: Religion and Politics in Tanzania*, edited by Mukandala et al. (2006). Quantitative survey data, for example, depict relations between religious communities as well as those between the religious communities and the state as generally harmonious. But when qualitative data and case studies of specific episodes are examined, interreligious relations as well as relations between the Muslim community and the state appear hostile and conflictual (Bakari 2001; Heilman and Kaiser 2002; Njozi 2003). The use of different methodologies leading to different conclusions suggests that the problem is still obscured in the intellectual discourse. Before we turn to the perceptions of religious organizations on issues of religion, secularism, and political discourse, it is important to briefly review two relevant themes that feature in the current literature: the rise of religious tensions and religion and political mobilization.

THE UPSURGE OF RELIGIOUS TENSIONS

Since the mid-1980s, tensions between Muslims and the state—and to some extent between Muslims and Christians—have been on the rise in Tanzania.

Kaiser (1996), for example, asserts that social unity is beginning to fragment, and Forster (1997) notes a similar trend. The manifestations of these conflicts take different forms, including denunciations in the media, Muslim and Christian open-air preaching, formal pastoral letters of protest from bishops, and stern warnings from the government. Generally, relations between the state and Christians have not deteriorated, whereas relations between the state and Muslims reached violent levels in 1993 and in 1998. In these incidents, violent confrontations between Muslims and the security forces left property damaged and scores of people dead, injured, detained, or imprisoned. According to Bakari and Ndumbaro (2006: 342), "the accusations and counteraccusations in the press, the loss of lives and property as well as the iron hand with which the police dealt with religious strife is a clear manifestation of a governance problem in state-religion relations."

Scholars have tried to identify the various factors that might account for the upward trend in religious tension in Tanzania since the late 1980s. Bakari and Ndumbaro (2006) attribute it to several factors: the collapse of the governing national ideology, *Ujamaa*, which, with its welfare-oriented policies, used to provide a social bond between people of different socioeconomic status; growth in worldwide religious militancy and activism in the 1980s; religious revivalism in Islam and Christianity in Tanzania; the emergence of open-air preaching; and the growth in the number of mosques and churches (particularly Pentecostal churches) since the 1980s. In addition, Bakari and Ndumbaro suggest that the liberalizing economic reforms that were introduced in the mid-1980s made it necessary to restructure political and social relations. These reforms created a need to redefine the nature of the state and its relations with society. In the process, new social forces emerged, including some religiously inspired ones. Furthermore, the political reforms that brought multiple parties also permitted increased freedom of expression and association, including religious association. The cumulative effect of these developments is what led Kaiser (1996) to talk of the demise of social unity in Tanzania between 1961 and 1986. The civil-territorial model of secular national identity that was being practiced in the first three decades of independence has increasingly been attacked by notions of social identity based on ethnicity and religion. Whatever the causes of conflict—interreligious, intrareligious, or religion versus state—they seem to have a direct impact on governance. Religious grievances and conflicts are likely to shape patterns of political association and mobilization, as the following section indicates.

RELIGION AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

Among the salient manifestations of religion and politics in Tanzania is the pattern of political mobilization. This refers to the manner and the extent to which

religion as a social cleavage influences political attitudes, political parties, and electoral processes. To be sure, some sections of the Muslim community have been questioning the secular nature of the Tanzanian state, but no political party has so far expressed its intent to establish a religious state in a multireligious nation.[9] Besides, the Political Parties Act of 1992 clearly states that a religious-based political party cannot be registered. Both Muslims and Christians are now politically organized in conventional political parties with broad membership of believers of different religions (Bakari and Ndumbaro 2006). Even in Zanzibar, where the population is predominantly Muslim, no political party has advanced a religious agenda in the ongoing political discourse. What can be inferred from the pattern of party organization and the political agenda of various parties and groups is that none of the parties is religiously based (TEMCO 1997, 2001). Whether this is due to the legal requirements for the registration of political parties or other factors is open to academic inquiry. Before the 2010 general election, it was widely believed that all mainstream religious organizations (Christian and Muslim) were proestablishment. In the 2010 general election, however, the support of Christian organizations seems to have shifted significantly to an opposition party, Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA).

The election-monitoring reports from the 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2010 general elections show that the ruling party and some opposition parties used religion to mobilize electoral support (TEMCO 1997, 2001, 2006, 2011). In the election campaigns in 2000, 2005 and 2010, for example, the use of religion was widespread. This was not confined to mosques and evangelical churches; it was also visible in the established Christian churches. Thus there are strong indictors to suggest that religious divisions are increasingly shaping electoral behavior in Tanzania. According to TEMCO reports, for example, the use of religion could be observed at all key stages of the election process, from the nomination of candidates within parties through to the campaigns and voting patterns. To determine the extent to which religion has been affecting electoral behavior would require in-depth empirical research to establish and is beyond the purview of this article.

From earlier studies, the influence of religion on voters' choices in Tanzania before the 2010 general election was considered to be relatively low (Heilman and Kaiser 2002; Mallya 1997). Heilman and Kaiser identified three features of the Tanzanian society that discourage or minimize the impact of religion on political mobilization and electoral behavior: cross-cutting cleavages, parity between group size and strength, and a lack of group consensus. Cross-cutting cleavages as a factor implies that religious communities are not exclusive in terms of ethnic identity, geographical boundaries, or party affiliation; this creates a disincentive to

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[9] Though Mallya (1997) claims that Zanzibar has been inclined toward establishing a religious state, his evidence, namely, Zanzibar's joining the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, is by no means conclusive.

organize and mobilize political support exclusively along religious lines. The relative parity between group size and strength in Tanzania means that political leaders, particularly in presidential elections, have to build broad coalitions of Muslims and Christians if they are to win both intraparty and national elections, in spite of the fact that a president may be elected by a simple majority. The lack of group consensus among both Muslims and Christians has also been singled out as one of the contributing factors discouraging extensive political mobilization along religious lines.

Therefore, religion has so far not been considered a critical factor in political mobilization, though it is becoming increasingly relevant, and the 2010 general election is believed to have been significantly influenced by religions consi-derations, among other factors. In the 1995, 2000, and 2005 general elections, it was the Civic United Front (CUF) that was strongly branded by the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party as a Muslim-based party, but in the 2010 general election, the ruling party accused CHADEMA, the main opposition party on the mainland, to have been strongly supported by the Christian church. No research has so far been undertaken to establish the degree of religious influence on the electoral behavior, and it is beyond the scope of this article to explore that aspect in detail, but from the casual observation, most analysts tend to agree that religion is becoming increasingly influential in Tanzania's electoral behavior.

PERCEPTIONS BY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Methodological Note

The research findings in this article are based on in-depth interviews with officials of six religious organizations in the country. Two of these organizations are Christian: the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), which is an association of Roman Catholic bishops, and the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT), which is a national umbrella organization of Protestant churches.[10] The other four organi-zations are all Muslim; two are based on the mainland, and two are based on the Zanzibar islands. The Muslim organizations on the mainland are the Supreme Council of Muslims in Tanzania (BAKWATA) and the Supreme Council of Muslims Organizations and Institutions in Tanzania (Baraza Kuu). The two Muslim organizations that are based in Zanzibar are the Mufti Office, which is a government department, and the Association for Islamic Mobilization and Propagation–Zanzibar (UAMSHO), which is considered to be antiestablishment. I

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[10] The sample of the six organizations is not representative of all the religious denominations in Tanzania. Therefore the views expressed by these organizations are not necessarily a reflection of the views of all the religious communities in the country. However, they may provide a rough picture of the general situation.

selected these organizations on the basis of the different religious and political positions and orientations they represent. For logistical reasons, the study did not include the Pentecostal Churches of Tanzania. The selection of four Muslim organizations versus two Christian organizations might create an impression of imbalance in representation of the two religions. The justifications for this selection were that Zanzibar is a relatively distinct polity within the United Republic of Tanzania and that Muslim religious organizations, unlike Christian ones, do not operate on both sides of the Union.

Methodologically, it might not be correct to consider the opinions and positions of the selected interviewees to represent the exact views and positions of the studied organizations. However, because those who were interviewed were all highly placed officials and, technically speaking, spokespeople of the organizations and because in some cases they refrained from responding to or commenting on particular questions because of the claimed sensitivity of the questions, the views expressed by these respondents most likely approximate the views of the organizations to a considerable degree.[11] In some cases, such views will be considered to be views of the organizations, particularly when other sources, including documentary ones, are available to corroborate those views and positions. With those inescapable methodological shortcomings in mind, most of conclusions drawn from the findings at this stage ought to be considered indicative rather than conclusive.

Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, it is not uncommon for the organizations and their spokespeople to present censored views that do not represent their inner positions and attitudes. The Secretary General of TEC, for example, divided the guiding interview questions into "sensitive," "provocative," and "okay" categories. The responses to the "sensitive" and "provocative" questions were mostly implied responses, and in some cases, it was very difficult or impossible to make inferences from vague responses or lack of response. The Secretary General commented that, given the increased use of the Internet, "in a minute, the whole world can now be misinformed about something." Generally, respondents in all the selected organizations were somewhat cautious in their responses but had interesting insights into the role of religion in the country.

On State Secularism

The state-religion relationship in Tanzania is specified under Article 19(1–3) of the United Republic of Tanzania Constitution. Article 19(1) states: "Every person has the right to the freedom of thought or conscience, belief or faith, and choice in

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[11] The in-depth interviewees were two officials from TEC, one official from CCT, two officials from BAKWATA, and one official each from Baraza Kuu, UAMSHO, and the Mufti Office. All the interviews were conducted between August and November 2007.

matters of religion, including freedom to change his religion or faith." Regarding the neutrality or secularism of the state, Article 19(2) provides that "[w]ithout prejudice to the relevant laws of the United Republic the profession of religion, worship and propagation of religion shall be free and a private affair of an individual; and the management of religious bodies shall not be part of the activities of the state authority."

As far as the constitutional provisions on the nature of the secular state are concerned, there seems to be no explicit quarrel between the followers of different religions. It is generally acknowledged that constitutional provisions as they stand provide adequate room for the enjoyment of religious freedom among different religions and denominations. Most of the complaints questioning the nature of the secular state are not, in principle, against the letter of the constitution but are largely related to practices of the state that constrict religious freedoms by using other legal instruments that appear to be incompatible with the spirit of the constitution.

The legal system in Tanzania that governs personal relationships among the Tanzanian people and between the people and the state emanates from three main sources: customary norms, religious laws, and state laws. Although the United Republic of Tanzania is constitutionally a secular state, it recognizes Islamic law in the domain of personal matters, such as marriage and divorce, inheritance, and *waqf*.[12]

Asked whether Tanzania is a secular state both constitutionally and in practice, the spokespeople for the six organizations who were interviewed seemed to have different views. Respondents from TEC and CCT acknowledged that Tanzania is a secular state both constitutionally and in practice. In their view, religion and politics are two separate spheres, and experience has shown that mixing them is not advisable. These respondents feel that religion may have a positive role in politics, but some people tend to misuse religion for earthly gains, which is very dangerous. According to the respondent from CCT, for example, "religious and political posts should be separated particularly at the level of leadership so as to avoid conflict of interests—a bishop, for example, cannot become a [government] minister."[13] However, church leaders underscore the necessity for political and religious leaders to work together for the development of the people. The CCT Deputy Secretary General noted that religious leaders strongly influence their followers through persuasion, unlike politicians, who sometimes have to resort to the use of force to induce compliance. He further stated that CCT's leaders are not members or leaders of political parties and are not supposed to be so.

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[12] *Waqf* is a permanent dedication of property by a Muslim for religious or charitable purposes in accordance with Islamic law.

[13] Interview with John Mapesa, Deputy Secretary General of CCT, February 28, 2008.

One church leader stated that "the notion of secularism in Tanzania was first applied by President Nyerere immediately after independence in order to achieve unity. After he had established a firm basis for state secularism, his successors, Mwinyi, Mkapa, and Kikwete also tried their level best to consolidate the secular notion of the state."[14] The other church leader further stated that whenever some religious groups (apparently referring to Muslims) try to penetrate the state for their own benefits, the church raises its concern through a prophetic voice. He gave an example that during the Second Phase Government (1985–1995), "this prophetic voice was to some extent silenced as the state ordered the Church to do only God's related matters and leave the earthly ones to the state."[15]

In line with the entrenchment of the notion of state secularism in Tanzania, the CCT respondent made clear that the CCT is totally against the establishment of the Kadhi court on two grounds. The first is that it will undermine the issue of the secular state. Second is the issue of funding; that is, it is not proper to use public funds to support any particular religion. It was further revealed that CCT had already sent its statement to the president indicating its position and reaction should the government proceed to establish the Kadhi court. The possible reaction, according to the respondent, is that the church might preach against the president. In a similar vein, the CCT respondent was opposed to Tanzania's joining the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), citing the Abuja Declaration, which calls for the Islamization of the entire world. He therefore said, "joining the OIC means Tanzania should follow the *Sharia*."

Whereas the views of the two Christian organizations on state secularism are similar, there seem to be quite remarkable differences in the views of the Muslim organizations. At one extreme, according to Sheikh Fadhil Suruga of the Mufti Office in Zanzibar, Tanzania is to the highest extent a secular state, both constitutionally and in practice. Sheikh Suruga stated that, in both principle and practice, he supported the idea of separating religion and politics in Tanzania because Tanzania is a country of all religions and a secular state, and religion and politics ought to be separated. To him, the practice of separation reduces social conflicts and promotes national integration. He illustrated his answer in support of the secular nature of the state by noting that people are free to worship—there is a high degree of religious tolerance, and both mosques and churches exist—and that currently there is close cooperation between Muslims and Christians through the two main interfaith institutions: the Peace and Stability Committee and the HIV/AIDS Committee, which were designed to promote peaceful dialogue among religious communities and to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS, respectively.[16] The respondents from BAKWATA seemed to take an intermediate view. While they

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[14] Interview with Fr. Michael Millunga, August 31, 2007.

[15] Interview with John Mapesa, Deputy Secretary General of the CCT, February 28, 2008.

[16] Interview with Sheikh Fadhil Suraga, Secretary of the Mufti Office, Zanzibar, October 2007.

too affirmed that Tanzania is a secular state, their response was not as unequivocal as that of the respondents from TEC, CCT, and the Mufti Office; it suggested the existence of some grains of doubt about the notion of state secularism in practice.

By contrast, the official view of Baraza Kuu is that Tanzania is constitutionally a secular state but that in practice, there is "a critical faith imbalance whereby the country is ruled under a Christian hegemony which promotes Islamphobia."[17] According to this view, the governance system in Tanzania is asymmetrically structured in favor of Christians in various sectors, particularly in education and public employment. The government is also alleged to be nontransparent as far as critical issues of national interests are concerned. For example, in 1992, a Memorandum of Understanding was negotiated between the government and the Christian organizations TEC and CCT.[18] An allegation was also raised that Christians had been given several public buildings for the establishment of universities such as Nyegezi and Tumaini Universities without difficulty,[19] but when Muslims were given the buildings to establish the Uni-versity of Morogoro, it became an issue of public concern and extensive publicity. The other illustration cited involved the status of human rights in Tanzania. According to the respondent from Baraza Kuu, most of human rights are enshrined in the constitution and specified in other statutory documents, but their enforcement (particularly those related to Muslims rights) is often disregarded. Cases were cited of Muslims who had been arrested, detained, and later released without any reasonable charges. The issue of Mwembechai killings of 1998 was also cited to demonstrate gross violation of human rights of Muslims by the state.[20]

The position of UAMSHO on the status of state secularism in Tanzania is similar to that of Baraza Kuu.[21] Tanzania is constitutionally considered a secular state, but in practice, that notion is not realized, as the state is seen to favor

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[17] Interview with Sheikh Ramadhan Sanze, Secretary General of Baraza Kuu, October 2007.

[18] Under the Memorandum of Understanding, the government recognized the important role played by the churches in the social services sector and pledged to help the churches by sharing with them grants from foreign (Western) governments and promised never to nationalize church institutions again. The German partner churches assisted in the negotiation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

[19] The fact, however, is that some of the public buildings that were handed over to church organizations had belonged to church organizations before there were nationalized.

[20] On February 13, 1998, at the Mwembechai mosque and its vicinity, according to the police reports, two people were shot dead and six were injured with live ammunition and several people were arrested in a series of clashes between Muslims and the police.

[21] Most Western observers consider UAMSHO a fundamentalist group. The U.S. Department of State's international religious freedom report (2006: 2) states: "the Mufti Office quietly engaged in a dialogue with Saudi-line Muslim groups such as Uamsho, a fundamentalist organization that does not recognize Zanzibar's Mufti Law and serves as an umbrella for other Islamic groups."

Christians, particularly in education, which is key to gaining public employment and a means of economic development. According to UAMSHO, the state established a Mufti Office in Zanzibar for the purpose of controlling Muslims and their activities on the islands. The state is seen to interfere excessively with religious issues particularly involving Muslims. The interference, according to UAMSHO, takes different forms, including resorting to the use of force, as was the case with the Mwembechai killings. Besides, even in economic issues, UAMSHO claims that there is no sensitivity to Islamic principles. Banking institutions in Tanzania, for example, do not consider the Islamic principle of non-interest-bearing loans. The reluctance of the Tanzanian state to join the OIC and the forced withdrawal of Zanzibar's membership from the organization in 1993 were also cited as evidence of the Christian dominance of the Tanzanian state. On the question of separating religion from politics, UAMSHO's position is similar to that of Baraza Kuu and BAKWATA, which share the view that religion and politics are intertwined and therefore cannot logically be separated in theory or in practice. This is the position of Islamic revivalist movements all over the world (Moten 1996). By contrast, TEC, CCT, and the Mufti Office advocate for the separation of religion and politics.

As was pointed out above, Muslims and Christians have different stances on the nature of state secularism. For example, in 1993, following the Zanzibar government's decision to join the OIC, the Tanzanian state was strongly criticized by those subscribing to the Christian view on the grounds that the government was deviating from its secular principles. On the part of Muslims, there is no common view on the secular nature of the state. Some Muslims seem to support the standard view and are of the opinion that the state is secular and impartial on matters of religion, but a significant fraction, including prominent Muslim leaders, politicians, and academics, believe that the Tanzanian state is nominally secular but Christian-dominated in practice. As the debate between the different perspectives continues, it appears that the common ground is limited, given that analysts tend to be extensively influenced by subjective considerations of their religious orientations. This lack of consensus on the fundamental nature of the state seems to have critical implications for governance and for the future role of the state in promoting national integration, peace and stability, religious harmony, and social justice. In particular, according to Kitima (2000), some Islamic religious communities in Tanzania have expressed discontent with the secular juridical system[22] and instead advocate the creation of a semisecular state, that is, one

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[22] On the mainland, the Kadhi institution was abolished in 1963 when the native courts and Kadhi courts were integrated with the "superior" courts (those exclusively for Europeans and Asians) to constitute a single-tier court system. Muslims on the mainland have been demanding reinstatement of the Kadhi courts. During the 2005 general elections, the issue was incorporated into the ruling party's manifesto. But as this article goes to publication, the issue remains unresolved.

that is influenced by religious laws. Kitima found this trend to be more pronounced in Zanzibar, where the majority of the people are Muslims.

On Religious Discrimination

The other critical area that has relevance to religion and governance is the perception of religious discrimination and freedom of worship by religious organizations and their respective communities of believers. According to Baraza Kuu, the level of religious discrimination in Tanzania is very high. This view is shared by UAMSHO, which cites the case of the government's establishment of Muslim controlling bodies such as the Mufti Office[23] in Zanzibar and BAKWATA on the mainland. The other illustration given by UAMSHO is that economic power is in the hands of Christians, especially on the mainland, and that most of the positions in the public service are occupied by Christians. In this view, regardless of the fact that at the moment both the President and Vice-President of the United Republic are Muslims, political power is dominated by Christians.

Whereas Baraza Kuu and UAMSHO allege that there is religious discrimination in Tanzania, BAKWATA and the Mufti Office seem to disagree. According to BAKWATA, the level of religious discrimination in Tanzania is moderate. According to the Mufti Office, there is no religious discrimination in the country. The views of BAKWATA and the Mufti Office seem to be shared by TEC and CCT. According to the TEC Secretary General, it is not true that there is religious discrimination in Tanzania, and to him, such as a question is rather "provocative." Likewise, according to church leaders, the allegations are not true, despite claims of discrimination against Muslims in accessing education, employment, and leadership posts in the government and claims that Christians dominate political, economic, and social life. The spokesman for CCT opined that Muslims are always complaining that they are lagging behind Christians, particularly in access to education, citing the Nyerere administration as the origin of the problem, but that the actual origin of the problem "is lack of awareness on the part of Muslims." He cited an example of his experience at primary school, when half of his classmates (female students) did not continue with secondary education, as they were taken to traditional coastal initiation ceremonies (*kuchezwa ngoma*) in preparation for married life.

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[23] In October 2001, the Mufti Act became law, which in effect meant that the secular government took upon itself the power to supervise and coordinate all Muslim activities on the islands, including settling all religious disputes involving Muslims, approving all Muslim activities and gatherings, supervising all mosques, and approving religious lectures by foreign clergy.

On Freedom of Worship and Freedom of Association and Expression

The stances of the religious organizations toward the regime are also shaped by their perception of the degree of civil and political liberties enjoyed by their respective religious communities. According to the respondents from TEC and CCT, matters have changed for better, and many rights, including freedom to join groups and to speak, have been extended. The CCT respondent, for example, admits that "freedom of worship in the country is very good since everyone is allowed to worship his or her own God or gods." The only problem he sees is that "such freedom has no limits and as a result some Muslims, for example, through *mihadhara* (open preaching), misuse it and misinterpret the Bible." In his view, there is nothing inherently wrong with *mihadhara* if used to preach and spread Islam; the problem arises when the freedom to preach is misused to insult and offend other religions.

A positive opinion on freedom of worship, association, and expression is also expressed by the spokesperson for the Mufti Office of Zanzibar, Sheikh Mussa Suraga. According to him, people are free to worship; there is a high degree of religious tolerance, both mosques and churches exist, and there is cooperation between Muslims and Christians, for example, through the two main interfaith institutions, namely, the peace and stability committee and HIV/AIDS committee that have been established to promote interreligious dialogue.

By contrast, Baraza Kuu and UAMSHO have a critical opinion on freedom of worship, association, and expression. The respondent from Baraza Kuu claimed that although Tanzania's constitution provides for freedom of worship, association, and expression, there are numerous clawbacks and bad laws that restrict the practice and enjoyment of these freedoms. Among the restrictive laws mentioned were the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2002 and the NGO Act of 2002. Therefore, according to the Secretary General of Baraza Kuu, in practice, the degree of the freedom of worship is moderate. He cited instances in Zanzibar in which people were arrested and detained for saying Eid prayers (following their fellow Muslims in the Arab world and elsewhere) before the prayers were officially announced by the Mufti of Zanzibar (*Uhuru* 2003). It is also the opinion of the respondent from Baraza Kuu that freedom of expression in Tanzania is only moderate. He cited an example of a book by Hamza Mustafa Njozi titled *Mwembechai Killings and the Political Future of Tanzania* (2000), which was banned by the government on the grounds that it was inflammatory.[24]

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[24] The book was a detailed account of the Mwembechai crisis, its religious and political context, and its broader implications in interreligious and intrareligious relations as well as Muslims relations with the state. It was published just a few months before an election, and the authorities probably thought that the book could jeopardize the legitimacy of the regime in power if it were allowed to circulate widely in the country.

The other issue related to freedom of expression is the question of religious preaching outside worship premises. This is a contentious issue in Tanzania, and it appears that Muslims and Christians have somewhat different positions on it. According to Baraza Kuu and UAMSHO, preaching outside worship buildings is acceptable as long as it is conducted in a disciplined manner and observes respect for other religions. The media are also a key institution in facilitating or hindering freedom of expression. The media's coverage of religious-related issues in Tanzania is considered poor as well as unbalanced in favor of Christians, who own most of the media channels.

Generally, according to UAMSHO and Baraza Kuu, freedom of worship in Tanzania is highly skewed in favor of Christians. Among the constraints cited include the restriction on Islamic preaching by the state and the existence of the Mufti Office in Zanzibar designed to control Muslim activities, including preaching. In Tanzania, the lack of freedom of expression is one of the areas that Muslims cite as evidence that their freedom of worship is restricted. There is a long list of Muslim sheikhs and preachers who have at one time or another found themselves accused by the state of mixing religion and politics or of inciting their followers to hate the followers of other religions. This phenomenon started immediately after independence and has continued to the present (Said 1998b) Whenever there is a fracas between Muslims and the state, some Muslim leaders and preachers are arrested and detained for some time. In 1968, for example, the Grand Mufti was deported to Zanzibar. Sheikh Tewa Said Tewa, Sheikh Kassim bin Juma, Sheikh Yahya Hussein, and Sheikh Issa Ponda are among those who were arrested or detained for what is referred to as mixing religion with politics. In Zanzibar, Sheikh Nassor Bachoo is well known for his frequent arrests by the police, and recently, leaders of UAMSHO have found themselves on several occasions in the hands of the state.

From the study of organizations' perceptions, it is evident that religious freedom and freedom of association are critical issues in the Tanzanian legal system as well as the state's practices. According to Kitima (2000: 238), independent Tanzania continued the same religious policies as the colonial governments. Thus "religious liberty was legally protected and guaranteed." However, Kitima admits that the state has been interfering in the internal affairs of some religions. Other studies (e.g., Bakari and Mussa, 2004; Njozi, 2003) assert that the legal system in Tanzania does not provide adequate protection of freedom of worship and association, even under the multiparty system that has come into being since 1992. Although the constitution protects freedom of worship, several clawback clauses restrict freedom of religion, including association on a religious basis.

The Societies Act, Cap. 337, R.E., 2002, for example, prohibits preaching or distributing material that might be considered inflammatory or represent a threat to public order. The government occasionally denies permission to religious

groups seeking to hold demonstrations if there is a perception that the gathering could lead to confrontation or ignite religious tensions. Ever since colonial days, the legal framework has barred religious organizations from engaging in politics. Initially, the prohibition was under the Societies Ordinance, Cap. 337; currently, it is under the Societies Act of 2002.

One of the key requirements of freedom of worship and preaching is that religious institutions enjoy adequate institutional autonomy. According to Bakari and Mussa (2004), there is significant variation between the two main religions in the degree of institutional autonomy that is allowed to religious organizations. While the main Christian institutions, such as TEC and the CCT, have continued to operate quite autonomously, BAKWATA, the Muslim national body, has since its creation been under state control, not legally but in terms of its original creation, leadership recruitment, and operations (Njozi 2003; Said 1998b). This differing approach to religious organizational autonomy by a state that is legally presumed to be secular partly explains the existence of the different perspectives on state-religion relations in Tanzania among the scholars and believers of different religions.

Perception of National Integration

The spokespeople for the six religious organizations in Tanzania seem to have different perceptions of the degree of national integration. According to the Mufti Office, BAKWATA, TEC, and CCT, the degree of national integration in Tanzania is generally strong, although according to TEC, it is incumbent on politicians to maintain and consolidate that integration. According to the respondents from BAKWATA, the process of national integration in Zanzibar is hindered by the existence of revolutionary tendencies whereby those in power are defending the status quo while the opposition strongly advocates political and socioeconomic changes. By contrast, according to the respondent from Baraza Kuu, national unity in Tanzania is fragile. Three main reasons given for this description are the glaring religious imbalance between Muslims and Christians, the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor, and the challenges of political competition in a fragile democracy. The respondent from UAMSHO expressed a similar view. According to him, in the case of Zanzibar, the level of religious and racial/ethnic discrimination is considered very low, but the level of regional discrimination is very high. People from Pemba, for example, are excessively discriminated against in the Zanzibar political system. Whereas the political system in Zanzibar is fragile, the degree of national unity on the mainland is considered relatively strong.

Perception of the Union

On the Union question, the six religious organizations have somewhat different perceptions. The respondent from the Mufti Office said that the Union is good and should continue in its present structure of two governments, that is, the Union government and the Zanzibar government. Similarly, according to the respondent from TEC, the Union is good except that that there is a conflict between the CCM and the CUF over who should control the Zanzibar government. A similar view was held by the TEC Secretary General, who said that he thinks the Union is important and should be consolidated to avoid chaos. The Deputy Secretary General of CCT was also of the opinion that the Union is good, but he expressed his concern that Zanzibar benefits more from it than mainlanders do in matters pertaining to resource distribution, including political and administrative posts in government.

On the Muslim side, the official from BAKWATA seemed to have a generally positive view toward the Union. By contrast, the respondents from Baraza Kuu and UAMSHO had a critical view. According to the respondent from Baraza Kuu "the Union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar as it stands now is not good." The reasons he cited included the lack of clearly defined terms of the Union Treaty. In his opinion, there is a lot of confusion on a number of issues both Union and non-Union issues. The jurisdictions tend to overlap, and the responsibilities and obligations are not clear between the parties. In his view, a three-government federal structure could help to resolve some of the persistent Union problems. The respondent from UAMSHO expressed a similar view. To him, the most critical problems of the Union include lack of clarity about the Union and non-Union matters such as ocean, oil, and taxes. He argued that the other problem linked to the Union is the Zanzibar political conflict (as represented by the two major parties) that has not been resolved to date. As to what should be done to solve the Union problems, the respondent from UAMSHO suggested that the government should involve the masses in finding lasting solutions to the Union problems.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITIES AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT

The six organizations differ markedly in their organizational resources and capacities. Whereas TEC and CCT are well institutionalized and sophisticated modern religious organizations and the Mufti Office in Zanzibar is a purely government department dealing with religious affairs (thus being structurally not comparable with other organizations), the three Muslim organizations—BAKWATA, Baraza Kuu and UAMSHO—are not well established and institutionalized. The same applies to resource endowments. TEC is and CCT have many resources and are capable of undertaking a wide range of activities in

socioeconomic development, while the three Muslim organizations have limited resources and run only a handful of activities. Baraza Kuu and UAMSHO are the ones with the least resources and therefore have less engagement in socio-economic activities.

Although it is not possible to determine exactly or even approximately the amount of their incomes and expenditures, or the sources of those incomes, one can get a rough picture of the organizations' resources from their engagement in activities. Of the six organizations, it is basically TEC, CCT, and BAKWATA that engage in a wide range of activities, particularly those related to the provision of education and health services, but the greatest volume of services is provided by TEC and CCT; the two Christian organizations and their affiliates account for more than three quarters of the services provided by religious organizations in Tanzania. It is estimated, for example, that the churches together currently run more than 50 percent of all medical services and secondary schools in Tanzania (Kilaini 1998).[25]

Related to the organizations' capacities is the issue of management and exercise of authority within them. Whereas there are clear and systematic management principles and procedures within TEC and CCT relating to leadership selection, human resource recruitment and management, decision making, finance management, professional conduct, conflict resolution, and the like, most of these organizational attributes are either glaringly weak or totally absent in Muslim organizations. Thus comparatively, Christians in Tanzania are more organized than Muslims are, and the gap in capacity between Muslim and Christian organizations is so wide that it is not likely to be bridged in the near future. Largely as a result of poor organization and management, most Muslim organizations are characterized by endemic internal conflicts. Although conflicts are also reported at times within Christian organizations, their relatively integrated and systematic principles and procedures and loyalty to the central authority within those organizations in most cases help to manage and resolve internal conflicts (Mmuya 2006; Tambila 2006).

Thus when it comes to policy influence, these organizations have markedly different capacities and hence different impacts on policy engagement. Baraza Kuu, for example, participates in some policy dialogues and engages in advocacy and lobbying for policy. Two striking examples of policy engagement and advocacy were mentioned in the interviews. The first example is Muslim protest against the policy of introducing Religious Education and Morals in Schools (EDIMASHUTA), which was aimed at designing a common curriculum for Christians and Muslims with aim of moderating religious feelings and promoting

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[25] It is difficult to verify the authenticity of the estimates, but the great proportion of the church contribution in the education and health sectors cannot be disputed.

religious tolerance among students. The second example is Muslim protest against allowing pregnant schoolgirls to continue with their studies, which some human rights activist groups advocate. For purposes of illustration, I will briefly explain these two cases.

In the first, Baraza Kuu, in collaboration with other Muslim organizations such as Warsha ya Maimamu (the Council of Imams), organized different strategies to protest against the proposed policy. The mosques were used to argue a case in the Friday prayers, Muslim newspapers, (e.g., *Annur* and *Nasaha*) were used, and some policymakers, particularly Muslims, were lobbied. When the Ministry of Education convened a meeting of religious organizations to deliberate on the issue of EDIMASHUTA, TEC and CCT were in favor of the move, but some Christian organizations, particularly the evangelical churches, seemed to be opposed to the proposed plan.

The second example is also quite striking. From June 21 to June 22, 2007, the Ministry of Education held a seminar at Giraffe Ocean View Hotel in Dar es Salaam. It invited leaders of religious organizations, both Muslim and Christian, to discuss the issue of schoolgirls' pregnancies. Baraza Kuu was one of the institutions that was invited, and it prepared its position paper against the proposed policy of allowing pregnant schoolgirls to continue with their studies. Baraza Kuu's position was that if the government were to disallow schoolgirls to get married but instead allow them to become pregnant and continue with their studies, that, in effect, would amount to destroying the institution of marriage and the licensing of adultery. The question was raised that if the current law forbids adultery and pregnancies among schoolgirls and yet some schoolteachers impregnate their pupils, what would be the situation if this law were to be abolished? With the new law, Baraza Kuu argued, which would allow pregnant schoolgirls to continue with their studies, "immoral school teachers could make scores of 'concubines' from their students."

According to Baraza Kuu, the severe penalty of preventing schoolgirls from completing school was needed as a deterrent, despite its implications for the ability of the girls to support themselves and their families in future. Baraza Kuu further argued that the problem of school dropouts as a result of pregnancies was statistically not as critical in Tanzania as were other factors such as the rate of absenteeism, which was 82 times greater than the pregnancy rate. It was argued that there was no region in Tanzania in which more than 1 percent of schoolgirls were affected by the pregnancy problem. The highest rate of schoolgirls' pregnancies was reported in Mtwara region, where it was only 0.2 percent. The Muslim position paper was hailed by all other religious denominations, including Christians, and the position was duly adopted as a consensus by all religious organizations that took part in the policy dialogue. With that common position by religious organizations, the government had to rescind its plan to introduce a new

policy relating to schoolgirls' pregnancies as demanded by human rights and gender equality activists (Baraza Kuu 2007).

UAMSHO, like Baraza Kuu, is critical of the government. It has on several occasions opposed government interests on policy issues. Some of the issues in which the organization engaged to influence policy include opposing the current tourism policy, opposing the establishment of the Mufti Office, criticizing the new public transport policy, and criticizing the government HIV/AIDS policy as well as lobbying for the establishment of human rights institutions in Zanzibar. UAMSHO has also been engaged in criticizing the government on corruption, particularly on the poor performance of the public service. The strategies that the organization uses to exert it influence on the government include making personal contacts with government leaders to talk about corruption, public meetings, and lobbying members of the House of Representatives on how to create strategies in the war against corruption and lack of public accountability.

In all these efforts, there has been no positive response from the government. Regarding the general contribution of civil society in providing input into the policy process in Zanzibar, the respondent from UAMSHO expressed the view that the influence of civil society on the policy process is insignificant in Zanzibar. According to UAMSHO, civil society is not involved, having no access to drafts of policy papers or opportunity to deliberate on them before the authorities approve the policies. The other Muslim organizations, BAKWATA and the Mufti Office, as state-sponsored organizations, can hardly pursue policy interests that are in opposition to the government's positions and therefore cannot be considered to have independent policy initiatives.

Christians are generally well organized and have a well-recognized representative body that acts as a spokesperson for the Christian community. When Christians have a policy position on a particular issue, they can easily get access to the corridors of policymaking to express their position in a formal and systematic way. Thus they often make effective demands to the authorities. By contrast, Muslims tend to present their demands in the form of protest or grievances, and the government authorities usually tend to take a defensive position. On the Muslims' side, there is no single organization or authority that could negotiate with the government on behalf of Muslims, while the Christian churches, through TEC and CCT, an umbrella organization consisting of Protestant denominations including Lutherans, Anglicans, and Moravians, collaborate effectively to engage with the government on various policy issues and decisions (Ludwig 1996). Christian organizations also engage in policy and advocacy through preaching, pastoral letters, and lobbying.[26]

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[26] Pastoral letters, which are issued by TEC and CCT bishops, are a very common and authoritative strategy used by the church in Tanzania to communicate with the government and the wider public on various issues, including policy positions and opinions.

In the recent past, there have been some initiatives by religious organizations of different denominations to collaborate with other civil society organizations in conducting research and to use research findings to exert pressure on the government on matters of policy and government accountability. In 2008, for example, religious leaders from the different denominations (bishops and sheikhs) in collaboration with the Legal Environmental Association of Tanzania instituted a committee to undertake research on the mining sector that was funded by the Christian Council of Norway. In their report, they urged the government to change legal provisions on mining to enable citizens to benefit from the sector (Curtis and Lissu 2008). Among the key observations of the report was that ordinary citizens are severely harassed in the mining areas. In terms of the economic benefits accruing to the citizens of Tanzania, the report, for example, stated that in the past five years, Tanzania had explored gold worth 2.5 billion U.S. dollars, but the country received only 21.7 million U.S. dollars.[27] Given the strategic position that religious organizations occupy in society, if they could effectively forge broad technical alliances—interreligious, interdenominational, and with other civil society organizations—to undertake research on policy and critical national issues in which they have common interest and issue joint statements expressing common stances, they could form a formidable societal force that could promote accountability, good governance, and development.

SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

There are very few studies on religion, secularism, and politics in Tanzania. Most of those that exist have been conducted in the post-liberalization era and tend to adopt varying approaches and methodologies, leading to different and competing conclusions and hence complicating the debate on religion, secularism, and politics in Tanzania.

The existing literature provides strong indications that religion will play a critical part in shaping Tanzania's development in the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, religion in Tanzania has not so far been accorded its due place in scholarship. A review of the available literature indicates some thematic areas in which in-depth research could be undertaken. These include investigating the problem of the secular state in the context of growing religious revivalism and the legal framework on which the political system is anchored. As this article goes to publication, the country is set for a national debate on a new constitution following the government presentation to Parliament in April 2011 of the Constitution Review Act, its subsequent withdrawal after the first reading because of widespread criticism by the public, and then the passing of the bill by Parliament on November

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[27] See, for example, the newspaper *Tanzania Daima*, March 5, 2008.

18, 2011, after some changes were made to it. From the preliminary debates that occurred before the official launch of the debates, it is evident that the issue of religion and its relationship with the state is going to feature (more than in any other time in Tanzania's history of constitutional development) as one of the most prominent issues in the constitutional debates.

The literature review and the in-depth interviews conducted with repre-sentatives of the six religious organizations, provide a basis for some tentative reflections. It can be extrapolated from this study that as a result of either incom-patible interests or mutual suspicion, the Muslim and Christian organizations and their respective communities tend to have different positions on a wide range of policy issues and government decisions. The incompatibility of interests on some issues is not in itself necessarily a bad thing if such interests are genuine and justified from a religious or even political point of view. However, when mutual suspicion negatively affects rational consideration of national issues as well as a sense of social justice, this may threaten national unity and political stability.

The Tanzanian state is grappling with the emerging problem of changing religion-state relations in Tanzania. To some analysts and religious leaders and followers, religious revivalism and increased religious consciousness are viewed as a threat to peace and national integration. To others, this development is con-gruent with the overall process of the development of society, both political and spiritual development and that prospects for the country will depend on how the new challenges are addressed. This involves, among other things, the recognition of differences that have to be accommodated in the context of the realities of multiculturalism at the expense of seeking and entrenching religious hegemony of a certain religion or denomination. Whereas some observers see the solution in changing peoples' religious perceptions on certain issues or their orientations on religious teachings, others seem to emphasize the creation of institutional arrange-ments and practices that would allow accommodation of diverse interests, poli-tical accountability, and good governance to ensure equity and justice in society for people with diverse identities, including religious ones.

My study has found remarkable differences between religious organizations in Tanzania. First and foremost, there are huge variations in organizations' ca-pacities, relations with the state, and attitudes toward the political system, capa-bilities of policy engagement, and perceptions on secularism and other political and policy issues. The glaring imbalance in capacities between the religious or-ganizations and their respective communities suggests a potential area for social disharmony and political conflict with religious connotations.

Second, the attitudes among the religious organizations and their communities toward each other are characterized by mutual suspicion. There is no transparency in the management of the organizations, and they tend to engage in extensive propaganda using print and electronic media and other channels. The suspicion

and hostile relations are not simply between Muslim and Christian organizations or between one religion and the state; they are also intrareligious and intra-denominational, although the latter are beyond the purview of this article.

Third, although religious communities and their organizations differ on a wide range of issues, there are some issues of common interest that cut across religious divides and denominations, including issues of ethics, morals, equity, and social justice. In that respect, a number of potential areas could be found to promote cordial relations among religious organizations as well as between the state and religious organizations. In the areas of economic activities and social service pro-visions, the state has been quite willing to cooperate with religious organizations, but in the areas of governance and policy issues, the rift is still wide. Admittedly, there have recently been some initiatives to involve religious leaders in some policy issues, such as those relating to education and gender.

Fourth, part of the reason why Muslims and Muslim organizations seem to be more hostile toward the state than are their Christian counterparts is that the state has historically sought to contain Muslim religious organizations more than Chris-tian ones for fear that the Muslim organizations will challenge the establishment. That said, one possible means of dealing with the existing hostile or suspicious Muslim-state relations is for the state to lessen its grip on the religious organiza-tions to allow them articulate their interests freely and engage in dialogue with the government on policy issues and critical decisions of the country.

Fifth, given the controversies surrounding some issues of public policy in Tanzania, there is for an academic discourse on a number of issues, laws, and decisions. These include the issue of establishment of the Kadhi court on the mainland and the decision of the Tanzania government or Zanzibar government to join the OIC. This could raise the level of understanding of religious issues with policy implications among academics, politicians, and believers of different reli-gions as well as the general public.

Finally, the conclusion advanced by this article is that with the high degree of suspicion that exists among religious communities and among religious organi-zations in the context of relatively weak governance structures, national inte-gration and political stability seem to be fragile in the face of religious and political challenges. Some fundamental issues, including the structure of the state, the constitution, and the Union question, have yet to be resolved in a way that can help to build a broad national consensus. To manage such challenges, the state ought to change its modus operandi from a state-centric to a more democratic approach that would allow free articulation of demands, including those of religious nature, and develop the structural capacity to handle those demands as a way of promoting peaceful coexistence and cooperation in a multireligious nation.

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